

G-man's G-string

IT IS hard to see why there is such a fuss over "Official and Confidential: The Secret Life of J. Edgar Hoover" by Anthony Summers (G.P. Putnam & Sons; 528 pages; \$25.95. Gollancz; £14.99). Most of its credible disclosures are old hat. The FBI director's rumoured homosexual relationship with Clyde Tolson was common gossip in Washington long before his death in 1972. Everybody everywhere knew that Hoover hated radical blacks and left-wingers of all colours. Criticism of his reluctance to take on the Mafia was a commonplace. And even Martians must by now have heard that some presidents were loth to scold, let alone to sack, Hoover lest he spill the

beans on their misdeeds.

The book contains some truly sensational revelations, but they are about as convincing as the scandal sheets at supermarket check-out counters. The Mafia hiring Lee Harvey Oswald to assassinate President Kennedy, for instance. Or, more implausibly still, the disclosure that Hoover and Roy Cohn, another notorious Red-baiter, liked dressing up in women's clothes to partake in sexual orgies with Aryan-looking boys. If this, or anything like it, had really happened, it would have become public knowledge donkey's years ago. The many people in the media who had reason to bear Hoover a grudge would have seen to that.